



## THE COUNTY OF KAUAI

DEREK S. K. KAWAKAMI, MAYOR

MICHAEL A. DAHLIG, MANAGING DIRECTOR

### News Release

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### **KFD honors individuals involved in February rescue**

LĪHU'E – The Kaua'i Fire Department held a special ceremony at Monday's Fire Commission Meeting to honor the community members, first responders, and health care providers involved in the rescue of an off-duty firefighter who was attacked by a shark in February.

"Each of the people honored today met their kuleana in continuum of care or the chain of survival for KFD Firefighter I Spencer Taylor-Steik," said Deputy Fire Chief Kilipaki Vaughan. "From Spencer himself to the teenage boaters, to the lifeguards, fire personnel, medics, Wilcox emergency room, Wilcox operating room, and post-surgery care – each community care practitioner answered the call to assist and we are proud to honor them today."

Shortly before 1:30 p.m. on Monday, Feb. 4, Taylor-Steik was surfing in waters off Hanalei Bay at a spot commonly known as "the bowl," when he was bit by a large Tiger shark.

Tommy Hamai, Kea Dwight, and Chaz Weimar were on a boat fishing about 100 yards away when they heard cries for help near the surf break.

They responded immediately and helped Taylor-Steik onto their boat, then called 911. The off-duty firefighter remained calm as he made a tourniquet with his surfboard leash around his left leg which had multiple lacerations from the shark bite.

He was brought to shore near Hanalei pier, where responding Hanalei lifeguards applied combat tourniquets and oxygen therapy.



Firefighters from the Hanalei fire station arrived on scene and continued bleeding control and oxygen therapy. Lifeguards assisted with transporting Taylor-Steik to Hanalei pavilion, where awaiting AMR medics provided further advanced life support while in transport to Wilcox Hospital.

Taylor-Steik went through emergency surgery that day, and remained at the hospital over the course of the next few days in stable condition. On Monday, he was able to see his rescuers again in person and thank them all for their life-saving efforts.

“To my brothers at Ocean Safety and Kaua’i Fire Department, to my colleagues at AMR and Wilcox Hospital,” he said as he addressed the crowd. “The reason I sit here today is because each of these people played their critical role in the chain of survival. I’d like to thank my wife, Whitney, for her support. And I’d especially like to thank Tommy, Kea, and Chaz. These three young men are outstanding members of our community. When they saw another human being in need of help, they came right for me. They didn’t hesitate. Without them and their quick action, I very well might not be sitting here today. Thank you all very much from the bottom of my heart.”

Mayor Derek S. K. Kawakami also attended the ceremony, and further congratulated all involved.

“It’s not every day that we get an opportunity to honor and say thank you to a brave team like those who are in this room today,” said Mayor Kawakami. “As Mayor, I couldn’t be more proud of the people here who are true ambassadors of this island. I also want to acknowledge Spencer for his remarkable courage throughout this entire traumatic experience. Seeing him here today, excelling in his recovery and back to serving our community, is an incredible testament to his strength and will.”

The Kaua'i Fire Department presented a total of 29 certificates to all individuals honored at Monday's ceremony.



**Above:** The Kaua'i Fire Department held a special ceremony at Monday's Fire Commission Meeting to honor the community members, first responders, and health care providers for their efforts in the rescue of Firefighter Spencer Taylor-Steik who was attacked by a shark in February.



**Above:** Spencer Taylor-Steik and wife Whitney are shown with Mayor Kawakami, Tommy Hamai (left) and Kea Dwight. Hamai, Dwight, and Chaz Weimar (not shown) received certificates from KFD for their bravery and immediate response in the rescue of Taylor-Steik.



**Above and below:** Spencer Taylor-Steik addressed the crowd and Fire Commission on Monday and thanked his rescuers.



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